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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION: Dan Rather and Les Midgley
3 September 1975

Mr. Rather said that CBS is working up a series of programs entitled, "The Assassinations," dealing with the assassinations of President Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, Rev. King, and the attempt on Gov. Wallace. He said they are particularly concerned that they have the facts about any possible CIA connection with Oswald. He said that it seems also, on its face, incredible that CIA had not had some contact with an ex-Marine who worked in the Soviet Union and returned. He said he realized the difference between an interview with him and making him an agent, but wanted to make sure he had covered all the bets. He referred to the work of Mark Lane in this field and I referred to Dick Gregory's paranoia on the subject of CIA connections with the Kennedy death.

We went over a variety of matters, but I essentially firmed it up at the end by saying that CIA had no contact with Oswald either during his Russian period or afterwards, that CIA's only records of Oswald came from our becoming aware of his visits to embassies in Mexico City, which information was made available to the Warren Commission, that there is absolutely no basis for a conclusion (and some indications to the contrary) that Howard Hunt visited Mexico at the time Oswald was there, and that the Russian traveler that CIA had interviewed was indeed a different individual than Oswald, despite the coincidence of the dates of his residence in the Soviet Union. I ended by saying I was prepared to give these answers under oath, based on information available within the Agency, although I had no personal knowledge of the matter. I said I could not believe that any additional information would surface in the Agency as it had been carefully examined from 1963 on, especially by Mr. Belin in the Rockefeller Commission investigations due to his personal interest in the matter. Mr. Midgley referred to the fact that some additional information is coming out from the FBI, and I pointed out

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that the Rockefeller Commission had not had a charter to look into the FBI. We discussed Allen Dulles's comments about whether an intelligence agent could ever be exposed, but we left on the final comment by Mr. Dulles that he believed Mr. Hoover's comments on this matter, which Mr. Rather said he probably would himself at that time. I said that this in no way indicated a desire by Mr. Dulles to conceal any CIA activity. Mr. Rather also said that Mr. Helms had become somewhat agitated over the Garrison allegations, and I said this was easily explained by Mr. Helms' concern that such false allegations be made against CIA. In response to Mr. Rather's question, I said I know of no indication that Mr. Helms' agitation was because Mr. Garrison was revealing information about the Agency which Mr. Helms wanted to remain concealed.

With respect to Oswald's one appearance in our records, I explained that CIA might well have shied off from any interview with him if there was an indication of prior FBI interest. As for the military, I said the Interagency Source Register did not indicate Mr. Oswald was a clandestine source and that DCS Joint Debriefing Program with the military services from 1953 on would probably have indicated any military debriefing for intelligence purposes, but none appear in our files, so I believed none had been conducted.

We parted with my assurance that anything else that arose which would cast doubt on my statements would be brought to Mr. Rather's attention. The two gentlemen expressed appreciation for our discussion.

COMMENT: From their attitude, I believe there is a chance that the program will indicate that there is no CIA connection with Oswald beyond that noted above. This could make a contribution to knocking down the paranoic belief to the contrary. We must, however, insure that Mr. Rather does learn anything which would cause the slightest doubt on the above account before he produces the programs in November.

WEC

W. E. Colby
Director

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